

Hundreds of thousands mobilize to demand Fund education, jobs for youth

By Monica Moorehead

On March 4 more than 100 demonstrations were organized in 33 states against the devastating cuts, layoffs and tuition hikes as part of the National Day of Action to Defend Education, including campuses such as the University of Maryland and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The following reports are examples of some of these significant protests, which are signs pointing to the potential of a revitalized national youth and student fight-back movement reminiscent of the 1960s.

BAY AREA, CALIF.

Tens of thousands of youth, students, parents, teachers, school workers and progressive allies took to the streets all over the Bay Area to “take a stand for public education.” This protest was the united response to more than \$20 billion in state, federal and local cuts to public schools. The success of the protest was largely due

to a truly grassroots convergence of protesters, from kindergarten students to the Gray Panthers.

The events began with major classroom walk-outs. At the University of California, Berkeley, students disrupted classes and led a massive walk-out. Students then marched to Oakland, where Bay Area students gathered for a rally of several thousand people.

In Oakland and Davis, Calif., students marched across the freeway ramps and blocked traffic on two interstate highways. More than 150 young people were arrested in Oakland after occupying Interstate 880 during rush hour. One young man suffered a head injury from falling from a freeway ramp after being chased by the police.

Leafleting, rallies and teach-ins were held throughout the Bay Area. Many teachers brought the protest into their classrooms. In West Contra Costa and Berkeley, teachers rallied and leafleted on busy street corners throughout the day.

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ALL OUT! MARCH 20 anti-war actions

U.S. imperialism’s crimes

against the Iraqi people are so great that no amount of lying in the corporate media can wipe them out. That doesn’t stop these manufacturers of instant misinformation from trying. They have hypocritically presented a patently fraudulent election, held under an occupying power and administered by a puppet regime, as a sterling example of democracy and courage.

There are still nearly 100,000 U.S.

troops in Iraq seven years after the illegal aggression, plus an equal number of “contractors” — mercenaries. The U.S. occupation has left more than 1 million dead and created 5 million refugees. It has exacerbated ethnic and religious differences leading to the brink of a partition of the country. Its puppet regime has been pressured to pass laws turning over Iraqi natural wealth to imperialist concerns, thus sowing the

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Claudia Jones – a legacy deferred

Excerpts from a speech by Andrea Egypt at a Workers World Party Black History Month forum in Detroit.

Sometimes a legacy can be buried within the rubble of politics for a long time, waiting to be unearthed and refined like a diamond in the rough.

Such is the legacy of Claudia Jones. She was persecuted by the McCarthyite anti-communist witch hunt and by the McCarran-Walter and Smith Acts against immigrants.

Claudia Jones was a triple threat: She was Black, a woman and a communist, at a time when this country was undergoing social and political upheaval.

She was powerful in both theory and practice, with a radical, revolutionary approach that challenged national and women’s oppression. She launched transnational challenges to U.S. foreign policy from the perspective of Marxist and Leninist theory. She had the ability to address a wide range of issues and was widely known as the Communist Party’s principal theorist on the “woman question.” She wrote reviews, theses and essays on Pan Africanism, Black nationalism, Afro-Asian Caribbeanism and immigration rights as well as the West Indian diaspora of struggle, using her journalistic skills to integrate issues of race, class and gender on local and international levels.

She was noted for the party’s theory of the “triple oppression” of Black women. She wrote that “if the party wanted to be a place of equality, then it means above all fighting for the economic equality of women, because her economic dependence on men in our society, and her exclusion from production makes for a double exploitation of women and triply so for Negro women in present-day society.”

Jones was born in 1916 in Port-au-Spain, Trinidad, then a British colony. Her family lived well until the cocoa industry crashed and her father lost his job. The family was forced to emigrate. She was 8 years old when they moved to Harlem, where they lived in squalid, impoverished conditions. Shortly after they assimilated, her mother died due to spinal meningitis and overwork in the garment factories. Her father could find only custodial work to support the family. They were so poor that Claudia missed receiving an important Citizenship Award at her high school because she had no clothes to wear for the ceremony.

Due to poor conditions, at the age of 17 she contracted tuberculosis and was committed to a sanitarium for a year. She suffered severe lung damage that affected her health throughout her life.

Her health, her living environment, the death of her mother, her father’s employment situation, her inability to find work except in laundries and factories, as well as her sisters being confined to housekeeping jobs — these encounters with racism, sexism, poverty and working class exploitation would later inspire her, as a journalist, to call for equal pay and equal rights for all women of the world, starting with Black women, in order to win real change.

Black journalism was on the rise. Between 1935 and 1936 she wrote a weekly column for the Negro Nationalist newspaper. She attended marches and rallies on matters like the Scottsboro 9 case. She was impressed by how the Communist Party’s legal defense raised the case to a national level, exposing the racist injustice of the criminal court system.

She decided to join the Young Communist League and by 1937 was elected to its National Council. In the

Andrea Egypt speaking at Int’l Women’s Day in Detroit.



WW PHOTO: KRIS HAMEL

1940s she became associate editor of the Weekly Review. Her weekly column, “The Quiz,” answered questions on religion, the Soviet Union and other political inquiries. She was editor in chief of the Political Score, which responded to political and social events and racial concerns surrounding the African-American struggle. She wrote “Half the World,” where she noted that the Communist Party needed to refine its position on gender and asserted that “white women need to be clear that the Negro question is prior to, and not equal to the women question.” She met with some criticism but stood firm in her belief that as the position of Black women advances, so will the entire social structure.

Her assessment was that “women bore the brunt of the culture’s economic and social exploitation and since women made up half the world population, no attempt to move society forward is possible if half the population remains unaccounted for and under-represented.” Between 1945 and 1946 she was Editor of Negro Affairs in the Daily Worker and was elected a full member of the National Committee of the Communist Party.

FBI agents had begun infiltrating her rallies and meetings to build a case against her for expulsion from the U.S. As she became more influential within the Communist Party in relation to her anti-imperialist views, the FBI seized upon the fact that no birth records identified her as a U.S. citizen.

Jones was arrested for deportation on Jan. 19, 1948, but released on \$1,000 bond a day later. FBI records show a firestorm of protests and petitions against her deportation.

The FBI continued to plant agents at every rally and event she participated in. Jones was arrested again in 1951 with many other party members, including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, under the Smith Act. Because of a speech she had given on International Women’s Day that challenged the overall male patriarchal establishment, she was charged with plotting the overthrow of the government. Her bail was raised higher this time.

Jones was sentenced to one year in prison but remained free on appeal. In 1955 the Supreme Court refused to hear her case and she was sent to federal prison, where she suffered a heart attack. She never recovered and her health began to interfere with her journalism.

Finally she was released but was forced into exile in Britain. She found refuge in the Caribbean community of Notting Hill, where she eventually became the Mother of Carnival.

There she also founded the West Indian Gazette and the Afro Asian Caribbean newspaper in 1958. She brought both awareness and self-identity to a nation subjected to the same racist and fascist imperial oppression, with a British twist. But her health and the newspaper began to suffer as she went in and out of hospitals to battle cardiovascular disease.

In 1964, Claudia Jones died of a heart attack. She was buried to the left of Karl Marx’s grave at London’s Highgate Cemetery. May we never forget to give her a rightful place for historical advancement and achievement in Black history and culture. □

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WWP celebrates International Women's Day

International Women's Day was celebrated at a Workers World Party forum in Detroit on March 6. A multinational and multigenerational panel of women speakers paid tribute to "sister soldiers" in the struggle and discussed how women's oppression can be overturned.

Comrades Debbie Johnson and Lee Booth paid homage to WWP members and friends in Michigan who have made important contributions to the struggles against imperialism and for social and economic justice and socialism. Megan Spencer, a feminist activist, artist and Michigan State University student, spoke about the links between women's oppression and environmental degradation and how the struggle against both must be anti-capitalist in order to succeed.

Sandra Hines, a leader in the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs, talked about African-American women in Detroit who have furthered the struggle for self-determination. Lauren Spencer, an intern at MSU's LGBT Resource Center, discussed how the struggle for lesbian/gay/bi/trans and queer liberation is intertwined with the struggle against racism and for women's rights.

Deirdre Griswold, a WWP national leader and the editor of Workers World newspaper, was presented with the Warrior Woman award for her many decades of exemplary leadership in the struggle. Griswold gave insights into the early struggles of women in the Party by focusing on the lives and work of WWP founding members Dorothy Ballan and Elizabeth Copeland. Ballan and Copeland were theoreticians as well as activists and extraordinary leaders in their unions, communities and the Party. The meeting was chaired by Andrea Egypt.

— Report and photos by Kris Hamel



WW PHOTO: CHERYL LABASH

Lauren Spencer, far left; Megan Spencer, left, speaking at International Working Women's Day event. Deirdre Griswold, above, receives "Warrior Woman Award" from Kris Hamel.

Detroit's 1937 Woolworth sit-down strike

How women workers led the way

The following excerpt from "Low-Wage Capitalism," by Fred Goldstein, recalls the importance of a little-known eight-day sit-down strike by women workers that swept the country and organized the Wal-Mart of the 1930s and other service companies.

One of the main features of the new low-wage capitalism today is the creation of millions of low-paid retail jobs. This is typified by Wal-Mart, the largest employer in the United States. The idea put forth that this vast section of the working class is beyond organization is really self-justification for the narrowness and lethargy of the present labor leadership. In this connection, it is worthwhile to take time to look back to the 1930s and a nearly forgotten chapter in the history of that period. It pertains to the 1937 Woolworth sit-down strike, which became nationally known at the time. This strike sparked a wave of rank-and-file sit-down rebellions, which led to organizing around the country in retail, hotels, restaurants, laundries, etc. The account of this strike and its aftermath has been preserved by Dana Frank as a chapter in the book, "Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century."

Here are some of the highlights of this episode.

The victory of the United Auto Workers over General Motors through the sit-downs at the Fisher Body plant in Flint was concluded on Feb. 11, 1937. The GM strike had idled 112,000 workers. Days after it was over, a strike wave in Detroit involved laundry workers, women custodial workers, high school students working as delivery workers and others in sit-downs.

On Feb. 27, 16 days after the GM victory, more than 100 young women workers at one of the 40 Woolworth stores in the city stopped the work, ushered the customers out, shut the doors and called the manager to come to a conference with all of them. They demanded raises, time and a half for more than 40 hours, company pay



Woolworth's racist, anti-worker, anti-union policies didn't stop these women, none of whom had ever been in a union before.

for uniforms, lunch allowances, breaks, recognition of the Waiters and Waitresses Union and hiring only through the union. The union had only one staff person there. None of the women had ever been in a union before.

The audacity of the strikers can be appreciated by the fact that they were up against the largest retailer of the era. In 1937 Woolworth's had more than 2,000 stores in the U.S., Canada and Cuba. It had 737 stores in Britain and 82 in Germany. "It was," in the words of Frank, "like striking Wal-Mart, the Gap, and McDonald's all at the same time."

It employed 65,000 workers, almost all young women. It was viciously anti-union. And it had a racist, white-only hiring policy. Woolworth's had a policy of deskilling its labor force. Says Frank, "Woolworth's formula is the same one used by McDonald's, Circuit City, and other big chains today. If the job is sufficiently deskilled, a huge potential labor pool opens up, and if

turnover rates are high, so much the better managers can then pick and choose." Most importantly, the management picked young women who had few options on the job market, who were more likely to work temporary, and who "in theory, were less likely to unionize."

The sit-down strike lasted a week, until March 5. It broke into the media during the first few days. The Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union was called in by the strikers — after they sat down. During the course of the strike the cooks' union supplied meals; the musicians' union supplied entertainment. Hotel workers from all around the city came to the site to picket and show solidarity.

UAW head Homer Martin came to Woolworth's to pledge union support. The head of the Detroit and Wayne County AFL showed up at the strike the first day. He held out a hand of solidarity to the CIO-affiliated UAW in support of the strike and donated money. The head of UAW Chrysler Local 7 showed support. The national president of HERE announced plans to come to Detroit to put the international behind the strike. It was settled before he arrived.

Five hours after the strike started, Kresge, Woolworth's biggest competitor, raised its workers' wages from \$14 a day to \$17. All over downtown Detroit, bosses were giving the workers raises in an attempt to stave off similar sit-downs.

The union shut down a second store with a sit-down strike and threatened to spread the strike to all 40 Woolworth stores. Support flowed in from around the country. The Retail Clerks in New York started a solidarity campaign.

In Detroit itself, sit-downs spread among thousands of local workers, from waitresses to kitchen workers to cafeteria, hotel, and factory workers. On March 4 U.S. Steel capitulated to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. While this drew all the headlines, on March 5 the biggest retail giant in the world caved

in and the Woolworth workers won all their demands, including the union shop. The union won a uniform contract for all 40 stores in Detroit, which covered 2,500 workers.

The effects of the strike rippled for a year. In Detroit, there were sit-downs at Lerner's, at Federated Department Stores, and numerous other downtown stores. In New York City, the retail clerks sat down at five H.L. Green stores. In East St. Louis, Ill., workers got a uniform contract covering Woolworth's, W.T. Grant, Newberry, and Kresge stores throughout the city. A similar victory took place among retail workers in Akron, Ohio, site of the first major sit-down strikes among the rubber workers. Some 1,500 workers at 33 Woolworth stores in St. Louis got a contract.

By year's end, chain variety stores, grocery and department stores had been organized in St. Paul and Duluth, Minn.; Tacoma and Centralia, Wash.; Superior, Wis.; and San Francisco.

In Seattle, wrote Frank, "3,000 clerks in 23 stores, including Sears, J.C. Penney, Frederick & Nelson's, the Bon Marché and Lerner's won not only the 40-hour week but a pay increase 'estimated to increase the income of the employees by at least one half-million dollars.' Over 60 years later, unions today in department stores all over the country owe their existence in part to the Woolworth strike."

This is an important struggle in the history of the workers' movement. Wal-Mart is no more anti-union today than Woolworth's was in 1937. This struggle shows that it is not the structure of the retail industry that determines whether or not it can be organized but the climate of the labor movement, the general level of struggle in the country and its effect on the rank-and-file.

See "Three Strikes: Miners, Musicians, Salesgirls, and the Fighting Spirit of Labor's Last Century," by Howard Zinn, Dana Frank and Robin G. Kelley; Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.

Daughter & mother fight police brutality

By Sharon Danann
Cleveland

An even bigger rally in support of the courageous stand of Rebecca Whitby and her mother will take place on March 9 on the steps of the Justice Center in Cleveland, where their trial is slated to go forward. The packed courtroom will remind the prosecutor and the judge of the Whitbys' widespread community support.

Last week the prosecution displayed great cruelty by pitting the two women against each other, using the love of a daughter for her mother as a way to break down the daughter's willingness to fight the false charges.

Her mother, also named Rebecca Whitby, was willing to take the plea deal offered last Tuesday when they reduced her obstruction charges to misdemeanors. But the younger Rebecca wanted to fight because the best deal the prosecu-

tion would offer still had a felony weapons charge with jail time (for allegedly trying to grab the cops' guns).

The prosecution said the women could not split their pleas that way. Seeing her mother's fears of facing jail time, the daughter said, "I didn't do it, but I will plead guilty." At the sound of her daughter's guilty plea, Mother Rebecca collapsed on the floor. The cops who beat the younger Rebecca in April laughed at her mother, before being dismissed from the courtroom. Emergency medical services were called, but they took more than 15 minutes to respond.

Fortunately, Scott Ramsey, the daughter's attorney, was allowed to withdraw her plea the following morning. So the fight is back on!

The charges the Whitbys are facing arose from a vicious beating of the younger woman by the police in the family's home in April and her mother's attempts



PHOTO: DAVID PATTERSON

Rebecca Whitby with her nephew, Mauriceon.

to protect her daughter from repeated punches in the face. The day after the family filed a report with the police de-

partment's Office of Professional Standards, a warrant was issued for the younger Whitby's arrest.

Sean Bell's family and supporters are pursuing internal New York Police Department proceedings and a civil lawsuit, following a despicable Feb. 16 U.S. Justice Department decision that there was insufficient evidence for federal charges against the cops who killed Bell and wounded two of his friends. Similarly, the supporters of the Whitby family will not stop with defeating the false charges they are facing. We will stand by the Whitbys until the cops are charged for their crimes and the family is compensated for their suffering.

Show support for Rebecca by signing on to her Web site at www.thealthambraincident.ning.com. Become members and leave photos, videos, comments on the case or messages of encouragement. □

'Stolen lives':

Never forget Malcolm Ferguson!

By Stephen Millies
New York

Cold winds didn't stop people from commemorating the 10th anniversary of Malcolm Ferguson's assassination by New York City police. Supporters gathered in the evening of March 1 outside the Bronx home of Juanita Young, Ferguson's mother.

Ferguson was 23 years old and unarmed when he was killed at point-blank range by undercover police officer Louis Rivera on March 1, 2000. Five days before his death, Ferguson had been arrested for protesting the shocking acquittal of four cops who had shot immigrant worker Amadou Diallo 41 times.

In 2007 a civil court jury determined that Rivera was "100 percent responsible" for Ferguson's death and awarded his mother more than \$10 million. However, the Bronx district attorney is appealing the just verdict and refuses to reopen the criminal case against this cop.

Police continue to threaten and abuse Juanita Young and her family. Last year Young, who is legally blind, was acquitted by a jury of throwing a box of cake mix at cops who had invaded her family's home.

Supporters gathering in the dusk put up a banner entitled "Stolen Lives" on Juanita Young's home. It listed hundreds of people who have been killed by police



across the United States. Christmas tree lights illuminated it.

Standing in front of the banner, Young spoke about the need to continue the struggle against police killings.

Allene Person told how her 19-year-old son, Timur Person, was also killed by police in the Bronx. Timur Person's hands were in the air when police pumped four bullets into his body on Dec. 13, 2006.

Jennifer Gonzalez told how her partner, Kenny Lazo, was beaten to death by cops in Suffolk County, N.Y., on April 12, 2008.

Michael Bishop from Picture the Homeless spoke. So did Martha Laureano, a leader of the Justice Committee, and Kathie Cheng from the October 22nd Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation.

A member of the International Action Center linked the struggle against police killings to the effort to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal. □

Protests denounce utility shutoff deaths



WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

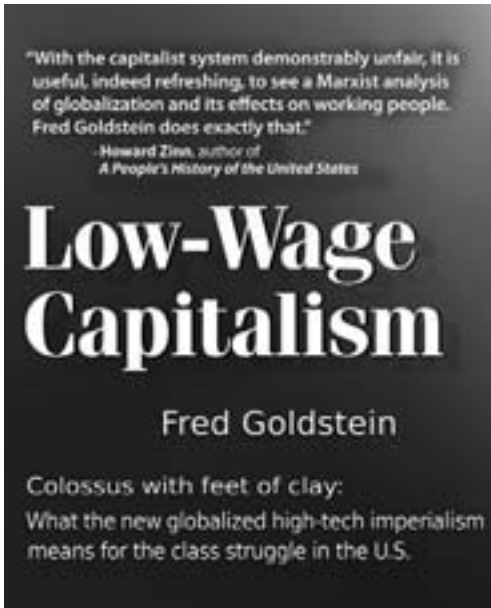
DTE Energy is responsible for the deaths of Travion Young, age 5; Salena, 3; and Fantasia, 4. That's what hundreds of community activists said at a noisy protest outside the utility monopoly's headquarters in downtown Detroit on March 4.

The three children were killed March 2 in a house fire after DTE earlier that day had disconnected their home's gas and electricity. Four of their siblings survived the blaze, which was caused by a faulty space heater given to the family by their landlord. The electrical hookup had been "illegally" reconnected in order to try to provide the family with warmth.

"Heat and lights are human rights!" and "Corporate killers!" chanted the protesters, who were outraged that Detroit Mayor Dave Bing has not uttered one word on the tragic fire and DTE's role in the children's deaths.

Organizers with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs are demanding the declaration of a state of emergency in Detroit and throughout Michigan and implementation of an immediate halt to all shutoffs and evictions. The Michigan Welfare Rights Organization has been organizing weekly protests outside DTE's corporate offices. The utility giant cut off service to more than 200,000 homes in metropolitan Detroit in 2009.

— Kris Hamel



"Patriarchal prejudice serves capitalism in two ways: it keeps the whole working class divided, and it holds down wages for women and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers. **Low-Wage Capitalism** shows the necessity and the great potential for solidarity among all the low-wage workers of the world."

Martha Grevatt Nat'l Executive Officer,
Pride At Work, AFL-CIO, UAW Local 122

"From the point of view of Filipino workers in the U.S., the largest exploited and abused Filipino workforce outside the Philippines ... we are pleased with the exposé of imperialist globalization as the main culprit of global forced migration."

Berna Ellorin, Chair, BAYAN USA

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Alabama bus drivers defend jobs, education

BULLETIN: As we go to press, the following update was posted to the SDS Tuscaloosa, Ala Facebook page: **“On March 9 at 2:30 a.m., First Transit and ATU came to an agreement on a contract.** This is great news because as most of you know, if there was no contract in place by today, the drivers would be locked out and scabs would be running the buses today. It hasn’t been voted upon yet by the drivers, and we have few details, but we will keep you updated. Go ahead and ride the buses, and when you do, thank your drivers and congratulate them on the change that their courage has created.”

**By Minnie Bruce Pratt
Tuscaloosa, Ala.**

A small, stalwart crowd rallied at the University of Alabama on March 4 in support of campus bus drivers fighting for their first union contract. A multinational group of protesters — including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and a U of A alumnae — defended education by supporting them. The rally was organized by Tuscaloosa Students for a Democratic Society and Students in Solidarity with Crimson Ride Shuttle Drivers. Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1028 is in negotiation with First Transit, which was subcontracted by the university in 2007 to run the “Crimson Ride Shuttle.” Local 1208 has a majority African-American and substantially female membership. First Transit is a subsidiary of FirstGroup/First Transit International, which originated in the privatization of bus services in the United Kingdom, and now owns a controlling stake in Greyhound Bus Lines.

David Collins, a former Crimson Ride driver, initiated the union by contacting the ATU in New York. He was later fired as the bus drivers voted to unionize last May. The university pays First Transit \$55 an hour to transport students; the drivers



Right to left: David Collins (with SDS sign), Jim Toweill, Chapin Rose Gray, Laura Langley, Stacy Morgan, Caroline James, Devon Morrisette, at the Crimson Ride Shuttle “hub” on the University of Alabama-Tuscaloosa campus, March 4.

WW PHOTO: MINNIE BRUCE PRATT

are paid \$9.50 an hour. At the rally Collins pointed out the extreme discrepancy, arguing that the surplus is simply “pocketed by the company” as profits. He noted the drivers are doing skilled work, requiring them to have a Class B operator’s license.

In a video, “Empty Promises: ATU Crimson Ride Drivers Speak Out!” (available at vimeo.com), Local 1028 workers reveal how they were promised raises, bonuses, holiday pay and other benefits by the company, and have seen none of this materialize. Workers have to file for unemployment when the university is out for holiday or summer breaks.

One worker said: “Last year what I made was almost poverty level. I’ve been a bus driver since 1956, I’ve just turned 74, and it would be hard for me to go out and find another job.” Another worker said: “I can’t hardly eat or feed my family, barely put gas in the car. I’ve got nieces

and nephews working in restaurants making what I do, and I’m supposed to be the bread and butter of my family.”

Another noted the attention the drivers give students: “We know who is graduating — and who is failing. We get them to their classes — and safely home from parties.”

At the rally, Caroline James, a junior psychology and communications major, said the Crimson Ride bus drivers were defending education by showing students the living struggle. She noted that in general students lack information on labor issues and labor organizing.

The local has gotten tremendous support in their struggle. On campus, the solidarity work for the bus drivers is being coordinated by Students in Support of the Crimson Ride Shuttle Drivers and SDS Tuscaloosa. The organizations set up teams to board the buses, leaflet other students, and speak out for the drivers while shuttling across campus. They were met with applause and pledges from students “not to ride.” In echo of the historic Montgomery Bus Boycott, Collins said the local’s message to students is: “Boycott the buses — no one should ride the buses” until First Transit meets the ATU Local 1208 demands.

When First Transit was intransigent about negotiating, and university administrators said this was none of their business, the organizers mounted a ferocious call-in campaign to University of Alabama President Robert DeWitt. Hundreds of calls poured in and the administration finally made a statement that First Transit received adequate subsidies from the university to pay the drivers a fair wage, and if First Transit did not do so, the university would seek other trans-

portation options.

Linking the rally to the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education, SDS organizer Chapin Rose Gray stated: “Students and workers are all facing the effects of the economic crisis — students are facing tuition hikes and workers at schools are being hit with layoffs and pay cuts. Today, workers and students stood together to defend education against this crisis.”

Gray also noted the clear connection between the billions spent by the U.S. to wage war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the cuts, tuition increases and wage squeezes in education. SDS Tuscaloosa plans a related protest on March 20, the anniversary of the most recent U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Labor support is also strong and includes members of the ATU local in Jackson, Miss.; the West Alabama Labor Council; and International Association of Machinists Local Lodge 2003 in Daleville, Ala.

Alabama leads the Southeast U.S. in workers represented by unions, at 212,000 — 12.3 percent of the workforce and rising. It is the only Southern state with double-digit percentage union membership.

Professor Bob Robicheaux, chair of University of Alabama-Birmingham’s Department of Marketing, Industrial Distribution and Economics, echoed big business when he claimed that if Alabama loses its status as a “right to work” state, and instead has “strong organized labor,” the state will lose its “attraction” to U.S. and non-U.S. business. (Birmingham News, March 2)

But the Crimson Shuttle bus drivers, and Alabama union workers, are putting big business on notice that the real rights in question are the right to a living wage and the right to a job. □



PHOTO: ANTHONY MAGLIONE

Help to publish: ‘What is Marxism all about?’

World View Forum is publishing this guide for activists that explains Marxist terminology in non-technical language. Terms like “imperialism,” “self-determination” and “socialism” are defined and illustrated. The Marxist definitions of these words help sharpen an understanding of society from a working-class perspective.

The book, which was first published in the 1970s as a pamphlet, has been revised, updated and edited by young activists in Fight Imperialism, Stand Together — FIST. It gives relevant analysis about the conditions faced by millions of people in capitalist society today, as the economic crisis hits working and oppressed people, including students and youth.

It is also a guide to action. This book is a must-read for students and youth organizers involved in the many struggles going on today across the country. Its short, concise chapters make it very usable as an organizing tool as well as for discussion groups, classes and meetings.

FIST organizers are committed to getting this new edition of “What is Marxism all about?” to student and youth activists nationwide.

Your help is needed! All aspects of writing, editing, proofreading, cover and book design were done by voluntary labor. However, printing and binding costs are high, causing us to turn to readers and activists for financial support.



Your contribution to print this book will make a difference! **Everyone who donates \$20 or more will receive a copy of “What is Marxism all about?”**

Yes! I want to help with publishing costs.

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Hundreds of thousands mobilize to demand Fund education, jobs for youth



Continued from page 1

The protests culminated in a massive multinational presence at City Hall Plaza in San Francisco. Fueled by recently revealed plans by Mayor Gavin Newsom to lay off more than 10,000 city workers, thousands gathered demanding an end to budget cuts.

Chanting “Education should be free — no cuts — no fees,” many held signs stating, “California 1st in prisons, 48th in education.”

NEW YORK CITY

Even before the rally began at 4 p.m., hundreds of students had already gathered in front of New York Gov. David Paterson’s office in midtown Manhattan. The rally was co-chaired by March 4 Coalition members Larry Hales from Fight Imperialism, Stand Together and Jackie Mariano, a Hunter College student and GABRIELA activist. By the time the march stepped off a little after 5 p.m., a multinational group of at least 2,000 people, mainly students and youth, took to the streets loudly demanding full funding for education.

Participating on the march was a strong delegation from the Professional Staff Congress along with representatives from the Transport Workers Union Local 100, Bail Out the People Movement, Peoples Organization for Progress and other workers and progressives in solidarity with students and teachers facing devastating budget cuts. The lead banner was carried by high school youth from Lyons Community School and Pace High School. Once the march reached the Fashion Institute of Technology — site of a Metropolitan Transit Authority hearing — the police prevented the protesters from joining an outdoor rally of the TWU and from attending the hearing. Minor scuffles broke out between the youth and police for the next two hours. The MTA is threatening major layoffs for the TWU, the elimination of free MetroCards for students and more service cuts and fare hikes for the general public. Read more about the NYC action in Hales’ interview on page 7.

BALTIMORE

Upwards of 1,000 youth and students, the majority of them African American, held a spirited, militant protest at a juvenile detention jail. More than a dozen youth carried out a heroic civil disobedience action inside the jail, while many police looked on. There were no arrests. Organized by the Algebra Project, the protest by these youth and their supporters, including the Bail Out the People Movement, demanded that \$100 million be spent on jobs and education for youth, not jails.

NORTH CAROLINA

At the University of North Carolina at Asheville, the campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society organized a film screening of “Walkout,” about the Chicano/a student movement in California



Chapel Hill, N.C.

PHOTO: RALEIGH FIST

during the late 1960s. At Salem College in Winston-Salem, Salem Against War organized a teach-in and community forum about public education, including attempts to resegregate the schools. North Carolina State University students organized a petition drive against tuition hikes and budget cuts, and dropped several banners around campus against education cuts.

At UNC Chapel Hill, students organized a week of action leading up to a demonstration on March 4. On March 1, the ad-hoc March 4 coalition organized a street theater action on campus that showed the massive amount of student debt — on average \$18,000 per student in North Carolina. On March 3, a campus discussion on local and national education cuts and tuition hikes was held.

About 60 students, workers, and faculty members gathered on March 4 for a “Funk the Cuts” rally followed by a march to the administration building. Chanting “No cuts, no fees, education must be free” and “They say cutback, we say fight back!” the march swelled up the front steps of the building. Once there, a group of nine students held a sit-in inside the building, presenting the chancellor with a statement and list of demands, including chop from the top, no privatization or commercialization of the university, an increase on corporate taxes to fill the budget shortfalls, and for full and equal access to education for undocumented students.

The students read articles aloud from Workers World newspaper during the sit-in, which ended after nearly an hour with no arrests. The chancellor agreed to meet with students to discuss their demands in two weeks.

The statewide coalition that formed around March 4 is building for another action on March 9 at the meeting of the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee, where tuition hikes approved by the UNC Board of Governors will be voted on.

DETROIT

A diverse group of labor, community and students rallied at Wayne State University

followed by a march through the campus with more students joining in. Chanting “Bail out the students, not the banks” and hoisting signs such as “Money for education, not War,” “Cancel student loan debt,” “Schools, not prisons,” and “Jobs NOW!,” the march ended with another rally at the Detroit Public Schools administration building to protest the ongoing union-busting, charter school implementation and privatization of DPS schools.

Speakers at the rallies included members of the Union of Part-Time Faculty-American Federation of Teachers and the American Association of University Professors-AFT at WSU; FIST-Detroit; Michigan Emergency Committee Against War & Injustice; Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures, Evictions and Utility Shutoffs; Veterans for Peace; Graduate Employee Organization-AFT, University of Michigan Ann Arbor; Restaurant Opportunities Center of Michigan; Solidarity; Critical Moment and By Any Means Necessary.

MILWAUKEE, WIS.

A protest organized by the Education Rights Campaign at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee was physically attacked by the police, resulting in the arrests of 15 protesters. The ERC, initiated by Milwaukee SDS, consist of more than 20 organizations demanding to lower high-level administrative salaries, democratize the school, and establish just policies for workers and students.

As the protesters peacefully marched to the chancellor’s office to deliver petitions and make a statement that students and workers will fight cuts, the chancellor and university administration locked their office doors, called the police, and then watched from their windows students being maced and beat up by campus police.

The 15 people charged with “unlawful assembly” face a total of \$4,255.50 in fines — almost a semester of tuition at UWM! Milwaukee SDS is demanding that all charges be dropped; an apology from the police for excessive use of force and for a public hearing with the chancellor



Providence, R.I.

WW PHOTO: BILL BATEMAN

on the impact of the economic crisis on the university. Go to www.sdsme.com.

BOSTON

Teachers, students, community activists, bus drivers and unionists endured bitter cold winds at a March 3 protest and press conference in front of the Boston School Committee office held by the Coalition for Equal Quality Education. The rally opposed the committee’s plans to cut \$50 million from the budget, close schools, lay off and fire teachers and expand privatized, for-profit education at the expense of public schools.

The rally was chaired by Sandra McIntosh of Work for Quality, Fight for Equity and the chair of CEQE. City Councilor Chuck Turner condemned the inadequate funding of education in the communities of Roxbury, Dorchester and Mattapan. He declared that charter schools failed to serve English language learners and special education students, and created a two-tier education system. The Bail Out the People Movement, Women’s Fightback Network, International Action Center, Workers World and other groups called for full funding for education; no to privatization and charter schools; money for schools, not bank bailouts and war; and no resegregation of the Boston schools.

Phebe Eckfeldt of the Union of Harvard Clerical and Technical Employees and Ed Childs of Local 26 Unite/HERE, Harvard Cafeteria Workers, linked the banks dictating cutbacks and layoffs at Harvard to the bank privatization of public schools.

Miya X of FIST called on youth to participate in the upcoming budget hearings and a demonstration on March 24. Andre Francois of USW Local 8751, the Boston School Bus Drivers, condemned the attack on services for the students, including transportation and limiting parents and students choices of schools to attend as a racist attempt to further resegregate Boston schools.

On March 4 more than 100 students rallied at the University of Massachusetts Boston against budget cuts and privatization, layoffs and outsourcing. After a spirited rally they marched through the campus build-

Continued on page 8



Boston

BOSTON WW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN



Los Angeles

SAN FRANCISCO WW PHOTO: JUDY GREENSPAN LOS ANGELES PHOTO: J. LA RIVA



San Francisco

WW interview with youth leader

Country-wide struggle unites students, workers, community

Hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and other education workers demonstrated, rallied, sat in and marched across the United States on March 4. Protesting cuts in education budgets and layoffs, they raised the powerful demand that education is a right of the working class. Workers World managing editor John Catalinotto spoke with a national leader of this action, Larry Hales of the youth organization Fight Imperialism, Stand Together. Hales had mobilized for the national action and co-chaired a rally of 2,000 people outside New York Gov. David Paterson's office here in midtown Manhattan. Hales explained the issues propelling this new movement, how the mobilization grew and what's next.

Workers World: What were the issues driving this massive student-led demonstration?

Larry Hales: The movement to defend education comes at a critical time. Youth unemployment, at depression levels for a long time among young people of color, has again spiked drastically. In inner city areas the buildings are dilapidated. Functioning schools are being closed and privatized. Young people know they need education to get jobs. The education crisis combines with the economic crisis to compel this struggle.

People in the streets are questioning the system. They raise "education is a right" and they see they are being denied that right. Unemployed youth believe going to school will help them get a job. In New York's City University [CUNY], enrollment has actually grown as much as 40 percent. Now that right to education is being attacked. This is the main motivation.

How much of the country was involved in the movement?

We have reports of 126 actions in 33 states. There might be more we haven't heard from yet. There were hundreds of thousands in California alone. In New York 2,000 people rallied outside Gov. Paterson's office, including a good contingent from the Professional Staff Congress, representing the city university workers and teachers. Most marched to the Fashion Institute of Technology to join an action the Transport Workers Union had organized. Thousands took part.

What was behind the dramatic action of Baltimore high-school students who besieged the detention center?

The Baltimore Algebra Project called this action. The group is a peer-to-peer tutoring organization with a political

component. It promotes the interest of students and young people, like fighting school closings and for funding for student and youth jobs.

I had attended a meeting where BAP planned to demand the government take the funds they use to lock people up and use it for jobs. We gave out flyers for March 4. They invited me to meet with them and I did, along with a Workers World Party comrade from Baltimore, Stephen Ceci.

They were pushing a national student bill of rights. A week after we met, they told me they would organize a meeting in front of the Juvenile Detention Center, demanding \$100 million to create jobs for young people.

A thousand mainly high-school youths marched on the center; 13 pushed inside and occupied the building. There were no arrests. The youths made their point in this courageous and militant way for jobs, not jails.

This struggle had opened up in California last fall after Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger announced drastic cuts. How did it become a country-wide action?

It piqued interest when people saw large numbers of California students willing to fight. When education workers joined this struggle it provided the push needed to call out people from other parts of the country to defend their rights to education. It couldn't have happened without the young people in California, where this struggle is most advanced.

We first raised the idea of a national demonstration at a Workers World Party conference in November, at a FIST workshop with 75 students and youths. We had to win people over to the idea, but by the end of the workshop activists there from other organizations picked up the idea with enthusiasm.

We talked to students from CUNY, from Students for Educational Rights at CCNY, the CUNY Campaign to Defend Education; to national leaders of Students for a Democratic Society; to Students Taking Action to Reclaim Education at the University of Maryland and Connecticut Students Against the War.

From then it grew toward a national conference call with 42 people in December. We had found out before that California had planned to call a March 4 statewide action and we successfully motivated that same date for a national action, which was in solidarity with the California action and complementary to it. It was clear that the action had potential.

What role did FIST play in building the demonstration?

FIST mobilized actively behind the March 4 national action, playing an especially strong role in New York City, North Carolina, Detroit, Cleveland and Boston. Connecticut SAW took on building a Web site, and we used the Internet to spread the word. But you can't build an action like this with the Internet alone.

We issued a national call when the California organizations issued their



WW PHOTO: JOHN CATALINOTTO

Larry Hales co-chairs rally in New York March 4.

statewide call, making both calls public around the same time.

I personally traveled and spoke to college and high-school students and other youths in Boston, Michigan, North Carolina, Baltimore and around New York. Everywhere I went, the high-school and college students and their parents were all for it. There was a mood to struggle and a need to do it based on the cuts they all were facing.

What was the role of teachers, other workers and the community?

The Professional Staff Congress at CUNY, K-12 organizations like Teachers for a Just Contract and Grassroots Education Movement in New York, and other organizations of community leaders and educators, like Coalition for Public Education, also were enthusiastic and did a lot of organizing. The powerful Transport Workers Union here had demands that complemented those of the high-school students.

Many students and youth, who may not now be working, come from working-class families and know their future is as workers — if there are jobs. Most youths value their teachers. They don't want their teachers to lose their jobs or get pay cuts. There was a lot of mutual solidarity.

FIST encouraged this solidarity in our literature and organizing, but the economic crisis was the objective basis for solidarity. Teachers saw the rebellious students as allies. There is even more reason for there to be mutual solidarity as the attacks continue and the movement grows.

In New York, for example, the move to eliminate student passes on subways and buses creates a basis for solidarity between the youths and the workers in the Transport Workers Union, who are threatened with layoffs.

Police tried to pen in the marching youth as they approached the TWU rally at Fashion Institute of Technology. What happened then?

Even as we marched along Lexington Avenue, police tried to confine the marchers to the sidewalk. There wasn't enough room. We stopped and said we would stay there if we didn't get the streets. The marchers started shouting, "Whose streets? Our streets." The police negotiator decided to cede the streets to the marchers.

Near FIT, the youths chanted, "We want unity" with the TWU. The police tried to surround the marchers. Some TWU workers began arguing with the police, saying they wanted the students with the workers. Finally we suggested the students go around the barricades and across the streets to the rally at FIT. Some, who the police blocked with mopeds, managed to cross Seventh Avenue and then cross back to rejoin the rally. They refused to be penned in.

What's next?

Since March 4 we've gotten lots of email messages saying we need to keep the momentum up and call for another day of national action. That's under discussion.

The May 1 Coalition had participated in our last three meetings in NYC. Many students look to that action, not only to support the initiative of the workers and especially the many immigrant workers in the coalition, but also to include demands from the student movement in the May 1 protest at Union Square.

The students see the need to join with the workers. The May 1 Coalition workers saw the strength of the student movement. We are hoping that the upsurge of the student movement will give a further push to May 1 in 2010, along with the immigrant and other workers.

There may be lots of local actions too. In some states there were lots of arrests — in University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, in California, some in New York, in Texas — and there will be actions in solidarity with the arrested students.

Our next conference call will decide the exact next step. What we saw on March 4 is the desire of young people to revitalize a movement of young students and workers. We plan to go forward in the militant spirit of the March 4 actions to the next steps in the struggle for education and jobs — for youths and for all workers. □



Detroit

WW PHOTO: BRYAN G. PFEIFER

International solidarity with U.S. youth, students

The following excerpted statements were issued in solidarity with the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education.

BANGLADESH

Revolutionary greetings. It is our great pleasure to get the chance to express our solidarity with the March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education being held countrywide in the U.S. Thanks to all who have arranged such a painstaking movement struggle against the violation of education rights in the U.S. We express our heartiest solidarity to your movement, especially this March 4 program. Nowadays, the capitalists and imperialists are intensifying their attack on basic human rights, including widely in the education sector. They are trying to resolve their crisis and maximize profits through privatization and the commercialization of education, and curtailing the budget in the education sector. In Bangladesh our organization is fighting against the attempt of national capitalists and imperialists to privatize and commercialize education, including fee increases and cuts of different student facilities.

We feel deeply that, in this era of globalization and imperialism, the movement for education rights should be through solidarity among the students’ organizations worldwide.

We are very much interested to build up and strengthen solidarity with all of the organizations fighting in the U.S. for this cause. Please inform how we can communicate with each other regularly.

Wishing for a successful March 4 National Day of Action to Defend Education.

With revolutionary greeting,
Central Committee
Socialist Students’ Front-Bangladesh

PHILIPPINES

Struggle for Education Rights Resist State Abandonment and Commercialization of Education

Solidarity Statement from the Philippines
Various students and youth belonging to the ANAKBAYAN Philippines (Sons and Daughters of the People), League of Filipino Students and Student Christian Movement of the Philippines, together with the National Union of Students of the Philippines and College Editors Guild of the Philippines, join in solidarity with the students, youth and education sector across the United States in the March 4 Nationwide Day of Action to Defend Education.

The picture is clear everywhere. It is the people who bear the brunt of rescuing big capitalists in this great recession, with the increasing slashes of social welfare funding including education.

In the U.S., the anti-students and anti-people policies, like the 32 percent tuition hike passed by the University of California Board of Regents last November, deserve the strongest condemnation of the youth. Most affected are people of color and students from working families who are still struggling with their outstanding mortgages.

Similar cases of tuition hikes have been experienced in other states, which all blame cutbacks in government funding.

Last year students, workers and faculty in the State University of New York and City University of New York militantly defied Governor Paterson’s ill-willed proposal of slashing \$698 million from the education budget, which would directly raise tuition fees for SUNY by \$620 per school year, \$600 for CUNY and \$400 for community colleges.

In Europe too last November there were massive worker-supported student strikes, like the mobilization of about 250,000 all across Germany in the clam-

or against the introduction of tuition increases and curriculum revisions.

Students in Austria and even in Scandinavian countries decried the bailout for the banks and held walk-outs and university occupations in resistance to the European Union’s Bologna process, which is to drive education more to serve imperialism.

Student movements in the Asian Pacific, especially in Indonesia, India and Korea, have also agitated against the worsening condition of youth with the state abandonment of education.

We therefore commend our fellow youth and students in California, New York City and throughout the U.S. for their courage to stand up inside the belly of the beast.

Cutbacks on state funding [are] abandonment of government’s responsibility and an outright attack to the people’s most basic right to education. [They pave] the way to exorbitant fee and tuition increases, academic staff layoffs, cramped rooms and a host of other infringements as a commercialized regime on education is imposed in various levels.

To delude the public, the government uses as an excuse the nominal increase in education funding, which is always lopsided and disproportionate to the number of new entrants. More obscene is the use of the argument that higher education is no longer a right and therefore, with the use of the globalization mantra, everyone is urged to pay for their education. Education is a commodity with a price-tag.

In the Philippines the myth of the liberal education, instituted from the direct [U.S.] American colonialism in our country up to the current regime, is unmasked a worsening education in crisis that is colonial, commercialized and fascist in character.

The global recession only further worsened the Philippine education sector, for in truth, the current Arroyo regime has been ruthlessly attacking our basic right

and with all servility imposes the policies of imperialist globalization that has led to worsened commercialization of education. In the tertiary level from 2001-2008 alone, the Arroyo regime presided over the 70 percent increase of the national average tuition and an allotment of a measly 1.8 percent of gross domestic product given to the entire education budget, pathetically way below the international standard and among the lowest in the world. This attack is done side-by-side with the enriching of international usurers, as the government favors foreign debt servicing and militarization in the annual national budget.

What happens to the youth who cannot continue their education? They are added to the battalions of the reserve labor force, or unemployed, or join the cheap semi-skilled workforce who are most exploited in times of capitalist crisis.

Faced with such attacks on our fundamental rights, we have no other option but to fight back. This is a lesson we have learned through decades of fearless struggle, and a lesson we will continue to uphold until we are victorious.

Once again, we Filipino youth raise our fists in solidarity with you in the continuing struggle to end the foreboding annual budget cuts and tuition increases. We must join our hands in resisting the onslaught of imperialism against our education and the youth’s future.

Education is a right, not a privilege!
Long live international solidarity!
The ANAKBAYAN Philippines, League of Filipino Students and Student Christian Movement of the Philippines are members of the International League of People Struggle and BAYAN; the National Union of Students of the Philippines and the College Editors Guild of the Philippines are the two biggest national alliances of student unions and campus publications in the Philippines.

WW PHOTO: ELLIE DORRITIE

Fund education, jobs for youth

Continued from page 6

ings, garnering an enthusiastic response from students. Later, the students participated in a teach-in on how to continue the struggle against budget cuts and fee increases.

LOS ANGELES

Thousands of K-12 teachers and support staff joined the angry voices of the education community statewide to protest the serious cuts and attacks on free public education and other vital community services in California. Elementary and secondary teachers started off the long day with informational pickets before school, some starting as early as 5:30 a.m. Then after a full day of teaching, teachers spread out to various locations to join the protests.

United Teachers of Los Angeles already suffered losses of 1,000 teachers last year. If the district and state government have their way, student-counselor ratios will be 1,000-to-1, student-teacher ratios will be 29-to-1 for kindergarten-to-3rd grades, and the number of school nurses and librarians will be slashed. Go to www.utla.net.

SAN DIEGO

A militant and angry protest was held on the University of California, San Diego, La Jolla campus in response to the latest racist outrage — a Ku Klux Klan hood raced on campus (Read article in last week’s Workers World). In mid-afternoon in Balboa Park, several thousand students, teachers and area activists of all ages assembled for a rally and spir-

ited march downtown to the State Office Building. The level of militancy at the Balboa Park rally, already high following angry speeches and political presentations by youth rappers, became further energized when a large group of chanting students from UCSD marched into the rally area. As they passed the city jail, marchers chanted, “Money for education, not incarceration!” Then, at the State Office Building, the crowd of nearly 5,000, overwhelmingly youth of color, closed off the street, forcing police to redirect traffic.

PROVIDENCE, R.I.

Providence students, groups such as PRISM (Providence student and youth movement), DARE Youth, supporters including Councilman John Lombardi and representatives from the George Wiley Center, and RI Tenants & Homeowners Association endured cold rain and snow in an action in front of the Providence School Department against plans to close seven elementary, middle and high schools over the next two years. Many of the students took the mic to decry the closings and to call for more funding for public education. Then, as James Brown’s music blasted over the sound system, they went onto Westminster Street waving their placards, getting honks and ‘shout-outs’ from passing motorists.

The event was emceed by Jauz Everliving of The 420 Crew, which promotes education with hip-hop culture. The event was co-sponsored by Save Our Schools Coalition and The RI Unemployed Council.

SEATTLE

Fighting against 26 percent funding cuts and a 14 percent yearly tuition increase, students walked out at the University of Washington. More than a thousand students, joined by university workers, rallied on campus. They then marched to the nearby business district. The action was called by the Student Worker Coalition, which demanded an end to economic attacks against students of color and low-income students. They also protested speedups and layoffs of campus workers. The action was endorsed by three campus unions.

UPSTATE NEW YORK

Two hundred students and their supporters marched in the streets from the Liberty Pole to Rochester City Hall protesting the proposed takeover of the city school district by the mayor. The community sees this attempted mayoral control as a first step in privatization of public education here. The march was initiated and organized by Rochester SDS.

SDS and the New York Public Interest Research Group organized a 12 hour sit-in in the Syracuse University Bird Library calling for lock-in tuition rates, student representation on the Board of Trustees and a limit on administrators’ salaries.

Ryan Hickey, SDS spokesperson, said the money should go to teaching assistants and graduate student faculty with low salaries and few fringe benefits.

In addition, protesters set up a “snow-



Buffalo, N.Y.

man army” in front of SU Chancellor Nancy Cantor’s office, to reinforce their demands. The sit-in also addressed the State’s \$148.8 million in budget cuts toward State University of New York.

At Onondaga County Community College, current and former SUNY OCC students and members of Syracuse Solidarity Network held a demonstration under the slogan: “No tuition hikes! We didn’t get a bailout!”

At Ed Smith School, local schoolchildren, parents and others rallied to protest cuts in state education funding. Rally organizers included Syracuse Teachers Association and Citizens Action of New York. The Syracuse school system faces an \$18 million shortfall in its 2010-11 budget.

In Buffalo, a protest was held in front of the downtown Erie County Holding Center by the Erie County Prisoners Rights Coalition.

Bill Bateman, Lydia Bayoneta, Sharon Black, Ben Carroll, Sara Catalinotto, Ellie Dorritie, Judy Greenspan, Bob McCubbin, Jim McMahon, Frank Neisser, Bryan G. Pfeifer and Minnie Bruce Pratt contributed to this roundup.

Pentagon says it will bomb in Somalia to wipe out resistance

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A recent statement issued by the Obama administration indicates that it is planning to carry out aerial bombardments in the Horn of Africa nation of Somalia. The announcement comes amid intense fighting in the capital of Mogadishu between the two Islamic resistance movements, Al Shabaab and Hizbul Islam, and the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government that is ruling the country.

It is broadly acknowledged that the TFG only controls a small section of the capital, having conceded other areas in Mogadishu and throughout the south and central regions to both resistance organizations. The U.S. is financing the presence of an African Union peacekeeping force known as AMISOM, which consists of approximately 5,000 troops from the pro-Western regimes of Uganda and Burundi.

Complicating matters further, there has been growing hostility between Hizbul Islam and Al Shabaab, resulting in clashes over control of the southern port city of Kismayo. Hizbul Islam has stated its willingness to engage in dialogue with Al Shabaab but has refused to hold negotiations with the TFG headed by Sheikh Shariff Sheikh Ahmed.

Sheikh Ibrahim Bare Mohammed, the Hizbul Islam Deputy Commander in the Bandir region, pledged to retain control of the areas occupied by his organization. “We are controlling many parts of Mogadishu and we will defend these areas because we are already here.” (Garowe Online, March 8)

The Hizbul Islam official continued: “We cannot accept our enemy controlling this region and we are not afraid of the American government. We will defeat any attack from the Somali government.”

The same article reported that U.S. officials have said, “What you are likely to

see is air strikes and Special Ops moving in, hitting and getting out.” The Obama administration has continued the same policy against Somalia as that of the previous regime of George W. Bush.

Gen. Mohamed Gelle Kahiya, the recently appointed commander of the TFG military, confirmed that the U.S. would be involved in the offensive. The Obama administration, just like its predecessors, views Somalia as strategic to imperialist interests.

According to the March 5 New York Times, “The United States is increasingly concerned about the link between Somalia and Yemen, a growing extremist hot spot, with fighters going back and forth across the Red Sea in what one Somali watcher described as an ‘Al Qaeda exchange program.’”

To minimize U.S. casualties and exact maximum damage to the Somali people, U.S. Special Forces are training and coordinating the TFG to stage ground operations while the U.S. forces handle bombings from the air and offshore. “This is not an American offensive,” U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson told the Times. “The U.S. military is not on the ground in Somalia. Full stop.”

The Times continues: “The Americans have provided covert training to Somali intelligence officers, logistical support to the peacekeepers, fuel for the maneuvers, surveillance information about insurgent positions and money for the bullets and guns. ... Washington is also using its heft as the biggest supplier of humanitarian aid to Somalia to encourage private aid agencies to move quickly into ‘new liberated areas’ and deliver services like food and medicine to the beleaguered Somali people in an effort to make the government more popular.”

The Obama administration has increased U.S. military assistance to Somalia

over the last several months. The New York Times admits that during 2009, when the TFG was on the verge of collapse, the U.S. sent in millions of dollars in weapons.

In addition to the Obama administration’s commitment to launch military strikes against Somalia, the activity of various European imperialist states and Canada is designed to increase pressure on the resistance forces in the country.

On March 5, European Union Naval spokesperson Commander John Harbour revealed that his forces have anticipated a spike in so-called “piracy” attacks off the coast of Somalia in the Gulf of Aden. “We know they’re coming,” said Harbour. “We’re taking the fight to the pirates.” (Associated Press)

On the same day the French frigate *Nivose* reported seizing 35 “pirates” in three days off the coast of Somalia. In four operations in early March, eleven people were reported taken into French custody, with the assistance of a Spanish maritime airplane that was engaged in a European Union military mission in the region.

The EU initiated what it calls the “Atlanta Anti-Piracy Mission” in December 2008 in a concerted plan with the U.S., NATO and other countries to guarantee undisturbed passage for vessels traveling through the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, the world’s busiest shipping lane.

This massive build-up over the last 15 months failed to eliminate attacks on ships by Somalis seeking compensation from firms for use of the waterways. In April 2009, the U.S. Navy killed three Somali teenagers who had held a U.S. boat in the Gulf of Aden. One 16-year-old was taken into custody, and is awaiting trial in New York City charged with crimes under U.S. law.

Somalia and the ‘war on terrorism’

In preparation for the upcoming offensive against Al Shabaab and Hizbul

Islam in Somalia, the Canadian, British and U.S. governments have taken measures against Somali expatriates living in these imperialist states. Canada authorities agreed to list Al Shabaab as a “terrorist group” purportedly to prevent the organization from raising funds inside the country. They also announced that anyone convicted of aiding the Somali resistance organization will be guilty of a criminal offense.

The British government is taking similar action against Al Shabaab, claiming that the Somali group is connected to Al Qaeda.

U.S. authorities recently brought a man to New York City to face charges of assisting a foreign “terrorist” organization. The indictment unsealed on March 8 claims that Mohamed Ibrahim Ahmed had traveled to Somalia in April 2009 and was trained at an Al Shabaab camp. Al Shabaab has been designated a “terrorist” organization by the U.S.

In 1992, the George H.W. Bush administration sent thousands of U.S. Marines into Somalia under the banner of United Nations Mission “Restore Hope.” Over the next 18 months, Somali resistance forces fought the U.S. military, which engaged in brutal acts of occupation and aggression against the people.

U.S. military losses forced the Clinton administration to withdraw. After 2001 Somalia became a central focus of the so-called “war on terrorism,” which is really designed to establish U.S. imperialist control over the Horn of Africa region and the surrounding waterways.

In 2006 Washington financed and coordinated a military invasion by the pro-Western government in neighboring Ethiopia. Most Ethiopian soldiers withdrew in January 2009 but have periodically entered the border regions to carry out operations against the resistance forces of Al Shabaab. □

Zimbabwe after 30 years of independence

Indigenization & gender equality on agenda

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Following are excerpts from an article detailing harsh British and U.S. sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe after veterans of that country’s liberation war began in 2000 to seize lands previously owned by British settlers. The article also outlines economic agreements made with China that aid the national economy. For the full article, see workers.org.

Against all odds the southern African nation of Zimbabwe is celebrating its 30th year of independence from British settler-colonialism.

In February and early March of 1980, nationwide elections were held in the former Rhodesia, named after racist colonialist Cecil Rhodes, in which the two leading national liberation movements, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front and the Zimbabwe African People’s Union-Patriotic Front, won the overwhelming majority of votes. This led to recognition by the international community of an independent state on April 18 of that year.

Currently, the government has emphasized “indigenization” of local industries.

Minister of Youth, Indigenization and Empowerment Saviour Kasukuwere said that the aim is to achieve sustainable development of the national economy and to fight poverty among the majority African population.

The March 8 Zimbabwe Herald pointed out, “The indigenization regulations require companies to — within the next three months — explain how they intend to fulfill the requirements of the law on empowerment and to have 51 percent ownership by Blacks in the next five years.”

Minister Kasukuwere continued, stating that the government had made progress in the areas of social issues, including health and education since independence in 1980 but had achieved little in the area of participation and ownership in the mainstream economy. The official noted that Western-initiated sanctions were still negatively impacting the country because the economy was foreign-run and dominated.

“We are under sanctions and these sanctions work because the economy is in the hands of foreigners,” Kasukuwere said. He also illustrated the role of the Western media: “Journalists are being asked to write hate stories about their country and surprisingly they write as many stories as they can falsifying some

facts in a bid to find negative stories about their country.”

Efforts to achieve gender equality

Zimbabwe is also undergoing a process of formulating a new constitution, resulting from the Global Political Agreement between ZANU-PF and two Movement for Democratic Change parties. In a March 8 Zimbabwe Herald article, Biata Beatrice Nyamupinga, who chairs the Zimbabwean Women Parliamentary Caucus and is a ZANU-PF Member of Parliament, said, “With 52 percent of its population being women, it is paramount and legitimate that women participate in this process as respected and equal citizens.”

Nyamupinga indicated that the country must work toward 50 percent representation for women in governmental structures. This policy is in line with the Protocol on Gender and Development of the regional Southern African Development Community, which was adopted by the Zimbabwe Parliament on Oct. 23.

“However, as women have already argued, it is quite evident that they are underrepresented in the management structures of the constitution-making process,” Nyamupinga said. The level of women’s participation in the process is 16 percent.

Nyamupinga pointed out that the “Women’s Caucus expresses gratitude to Vice President Joice Mujuru and Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe for coming out forcefully to seeing to it that women representation is effected within the constitution-making process management structures.”

At a January meeting of the ZANU-PF Women’s League, National Secretary Opah Muchinguri noted that the country is obligated to reach the 50-50 representation in decision making as mandated by the SADC protocols. Muchinguri announced that a two-week induction course will prepare women party activists to ensure the achievement of these goals. (Zimbabwe Herald, Jan. 31)

“We will also walk them through various achievements the League has made since independence and the effects of sanctions on ordinary persons. It is also in this context that we are urging the MDC-T [Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai] to tell the West to remove sanctions,” she said.

ZANU-PF Women’s League Secretary for Information Monica Mutsvangwa also said in the same article that they were demanding that the sanctions be lifted.

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WORKERS WORLD
editorial

ALL OUT! MARCH 20 anti-war actions

Continued from page 1

seeds of a potential civil war.

But the corporate media, by apparent prior agreement, writes glowingly of Iraqis dipping their fingers in ink as if the election were a proof of Iraqi sovereignty.

All the more reason why anyone who opposed this war at the beginning, and the millions more who want it over with now, should head to the protest in Washington or other regional centers on March 20 to make their voices as strong and dramatic as they can.

Just as in the days of war criminal George W. Bush, a Republican, U.S. wars and occupations continue in Iraq under the Democratic Party administration, even expanding in Afghanistan and stretching into Pakistan. The Pentagon is also intervening in Somalia and Yemen and continually threatening Iran, with or without a first strike by the Israeli military. Not to speak of other interventions threatened in the Caribbean, South America and the Pacific.

In this period, the workers in the United States have been hit with the worst capitalist recession since the 1930s — one in which a short-lived recovery for the stock market has

brought no recovery to the job market, despite colossal bailouts to the banks and brokerage houses by the Obama administration. This crisis at home has focused attention here on the desperate economic questions facing the working class and oppressed peoples.

But there is no way to separate the need to fight imperialist war from the need to struggle on basic economic issues. The two struggles must be carried on simultaneously and intertwined.

The March 20 demonstrations, in Washington, Los Angeles and San Francisco, called by the Answer Coalition to mark the seventh anniversary of the criminal U.S. invasion of Iraq, raise the slogans: U.S. Out of Afghanistan and Iraq; Free Palestine; Reparations for Haiti; and Money for Health Care, Jobs and Education. Many other anti-imperialist, anti-war, community and progressive organizations have endorsed these actions, including the International Action Center and the Bail Out the People Movement.

Workers World has endorsed them, too, and calls again upon the working-class and progressive people to mobilize participation in them throughout the country. □

DOUBLE STANDARDS in Black and white

Crookedness in U.S. ruling-class politics is the rule, not the exception. To win the game, politicians often have to play by the same rule book as their peers — a book that’s filled with corrupt tricks. So why is it that some politicians get singled out for exposure, if they’re all playing the game?

In the past couple of weeks, two Black New York politicians, Gov. David Paterson and Rep. Charles Rangel, have been the target of highly publicized ethics investigations. Rangel has been forced to step down from his position as chairperson of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, which is charged with writing tax legislation and bills affecting Social Security, Medicare and other social service programs. Paterson has said he will not seek reelection, while many are clamoring for his resignation.

There’s another rule in the U.S. politics rule book: the double standard. It’s pretty safe to say that most ruling-class politicians accept bribes, cheat on their spouses and commit all sorts of crimes that they’re never charged for and never see the light of day. And that doesn’t even mention the open crimes that aren’t labeled as such, like sending

troops to kill and be killed around the world, or ensuring poverty and starvation by denying the right to food, education, housing and/or health care.

But when things get tense — say, during the height of a devastating economic crisis — and the powers-that-be need a fall guy or become concerned about a politician’s allegiances, they’ll dig up as much dirt as possible and put it on display for the public to condemn.

Both Paterson and Rangel have contradictory records when it comes to support for working people. They may or may not have committed the ethics violations.

The double standard is especially used when it comes to Black politicians. The racist U.S. ruling class through the years has attacked Black politicians, from Harlem Congressperson Adam Clayton Powell Jr. to Massachusetts Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, former Milwaukee Alderman Michael McGee Jr. and Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner. The goal is to remind those Black politicians still in office that they’d better not get out of line, either. A more insidious goal is to socially disenfranchise the communities of color that these politicians represent. □

Support the Saturday MARCH 20th D.C. Anti-War Protest

Gathering: Noon at the White House (Lafayette Park)

**U.S. OUT of
Afghanistan
& Iraq Now**

**FREE
PALESTINE**
No Sanctions
Against IRAN

**MONEY for
a NATIONAL
PUBLIC JOBS
PROGRAM**
to Employ
Millions at a
Living Wage

**Funds for
HAITI
NOT U.S.
Occupation**

**FREE
MUMIA
ABU-JAMAL**

End Repression in **HONDURAS**

**Equal Rights for
IMMIGRANTS**

Join The National Fight Back Contingent

Bring friends, signs and drums; march with activists from many states.

To purchase a bus ticket (\$40 or \$25 students/fixed income) from NYC to D.C., contact the Int’l Action Center at **212-633-6646** (2:00-9:00 p.m., M-F; 12:00-6:00 p.m. Sat.) Buses leave 6:30 a.m. from IAC office, 55 W. 17th St., NYC, return at 11:00 p.m.

Stay overnight for the **March 21 Mass Rally for Immigrant Rights** in D.C. For information, email the **May 1st Coalition** at mayday2010@peoplesmail.net or call **212-633-6646**.

March 4: Hope awakens

The March 4 national action for education rights was a massive student and youth outpouring that brought hope to many. But it was not only an upsurge of university students, as welcome as that alone would be. Representative sectors of the working class and of people of color joined the struggle and broadened its meaning.

Teachers, cafeteria and maintenance workers, and others at public universities and public K-12 schools joined the struggle with enthusiasm. Outside the schools themselves, unions like the Transport Workers in New York and the Boston school bus drivers endorsed actions. These workers’ interests are closely connected with funding for transport of students, who may be their own children.

In working-class communities, parents of school-age youth identify completely with the struggle for a good education — tying this to future jobs for their children. Public high school and university students are themselves mostly from working-class families. They identify with their teachers. They may be working their way through school. Or they may have returned to studies after losing their jobs.

The March 4 actions provided, in embryonic form, a unity and solidarity of youth, community and workers of all nationalities, including immigrant workers. A look at the photos of the protests shows that women and people of color were in the front ranks, and that sections of the entire multinational working class were involved because they all have a common class interest.

Progressive organizers must do what is possible to help this solidarity and militancy continue to develop into a powerful struggle in defense of education rights. But one can also dream that it will become more than that. That the spirit of struggle and unity will spread to other sectors of the working class. That these workers will compel their unions, which have been passive in the face of ruthless ruling-class assault, to fight back with the same level of determination.

In the past weeks union workers in Greece have taken to the streets, refusing to submit to the dictates of the European capitalists and Wall Street financiers. Why not here? The March 4 struggle has opened the door to this dream. □

Zimbabwe after 30 years of independence

Indigenization & gender equality on agenda

Continued from page 9

She pointed out that “David Miliband, the British Foreign Secretary, has finally owned up to the imposition of illegal sanctions on Zimbabwe.”

Mutsvangwa emphasized that “The ZANU-PF Women’s League appeals to Britain, the European Union and the United States to remove the sanctions. We call for a new chapter in Africa-Europe relations.”

She added, “For the first 15 years of independence, we went through the bliss of hard won freedom. We saw our country

make great progress in all human indices of progress as we filled our granaries. Alas our respite from pain and suffering was short-lived. Soon after we embarked on the land reform program the West imposed sanctions.”

Dr. Olivia Muchena, the Zimbabwe Minister of Women’s Affairs, Gender and Community Development, stated in a recent lecture inside the country, “With adequate support, women could contribute significantly to the turnaround of the country’s economic fortunes.” (Ziana News Agency, Feb. 2) □

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U.S. government backs Honduran oligarchy

By Michael Kramer

The Obama administration continues to support the ruthless Honduran oligarchy in its war against a nonviolent political and social movement led by the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular. The movement has united peasants, workers, trade unionists and students; the Garifuna, Afro-Honduran and Indigenous communities; and lesbian/gay/bi/trans/queer activists, women’s groups, intellectuals and Christians guided by liberation theology.

The FNRP was formed after the Honduran military kidnapped President Jose Manuel Zelaya. On June 28 Zelaya was taken from his residence to the Soto Cano Air Base — a U.S. military installation in Honduras — and flown to San Jose, Costa Rica.

The Obama administration claimed it knew nothing of the coup until after the fact. But aircraft cannot fly in or out of the base without clearance from the 612th Air Base Squadron, which is in charge of base

operations, air traffic control and checking flight manifests. Vehicles cannot enter or leave the base without clearance from the Joint Security Force, which is responsible for base security and includes Army, Marine and Air Force personnel.

The Honduran military has umbilical-cord ties to the Pentagon. Two of the military leaders of the coup — Gen. Romeo Vasquez and Gen. Luis Javier Prince Suazo — are graduates of the School of the Americas located on the U.S. Army base at Fort Benning, Ga. The Honduran Air Force Academy is located on the Soto Cano Air Base. It is inconceivable that the Honduran military could make the necessary coup preparations, including troop movements and telephone calls, without Pentagon, CIA and U.S. embassy knowledge.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told reporters during a recent trip to South America that “The Honduras crisis has been managed to a successful conclusion. It was done without a civil war, it was done without violence, and I think

that our policy in the vast majority of countries in Latin America is either given high marks or great respect.” (Reuters, March 1) This is a lie.

This writer travelled to Honduras in October as part of a fact-finding and solidarity delegation initiated by the International Action Center and observed firsthand a civil war — from the barrios to downtown — in the streets of the capital city Tegucigalpa. One side — the Armed Forces of Honduras and the National Police — had automatic weapons and crowd suppression devices, while the other side — the FNRP — was completely unarmed.

Since day one of the coup the oligarchy has used violence in an attempt to destroy the FNRP. Peaceful demonstrators have been beaten up, gassed and shot to death. Death squads and nightriders in pickup trucks with tinted windows have followed and seized FNRP members. In February Vanessa Yamileth Zepeda, a leader of the Workers Union for the Honduran Social Security Institute; Julio Funez Benitez,

a member of the SANAA national utility union; and Claudia Larisa Brizuela Rodriguez, the daughter of a prominent FNRP leader, were all murdered by death squads.

The Feminist Collective of University Women is a radical women’s organization that opposes the coup and supports LG-BTQ rights. In an interview posted on the Web site hondurashumanrights.wordpress.com on March 7, members Blanca Dole, Celeste Mejia and Gabriela Flores all described receiving threatening phone calls and being followed by cars with tinted windows and no license plates.

Solidarity is key

Most Latin American countries do not recognize the coup-installed government, whether led by Roberto Micheletti or Porfirio Lobo. Yet on March 4 Clinton directed the release of \$30 million to the current coup leaders.

At this time international solidarity, especially from North America, is most important to the FNRP. The rotation of short-term delegations and the work of activists based in Honduras give space to the FNRP and ensure that the Honduran people are not isolated and that the actions of the oligarchy and the Honduran military are documented for future consideration in international courts of justice.

North American solidarity with the Honduran people has its own heroic history. James Carney, a Jesuit priest from Missouri known as Padre Guadalupe, was the spiritual advisor to a Honduran guerrilla unit of the Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers-Honduras. In July 1983 Padre Guadalupe was captured by the infamous Honduran army Battalion 3-16 and executed with CIA agents present.

One of the leaders of the unit who was killed in the same action was the Nicaraguan-American David Arturo Baez Cruz. Baez Cruz was a former member of the U. S. Army Special Forces who was radicalized while stationed in Panama. The events are described in the book “Inside Delta Force” by Eric Haney, a U.S. military advisor to Battalion 3-16 in July 1983.

Thousands will gather in Washington, D.C., on March 20 to protest the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It is important that the U.S. war against the people of Honduras also be on the agenda that day. □

GREECE

Unionists resist police attacks, fight austerity

By G. Dunkel

The Greek Parliament passed a very stringent set of austerity measures March 5 that will cut public-sector salaries and freeze pensions for both public- and private-sector workers, cut services and raise taxes.

Public service workers will have their salaries cut by almost 15 percent and the retirement age for all workers will go up by two years.

The Communist-affiliated labor confederation PAME (All-Workers Militant Front), to which a number of public service workers belong, called a 24-hour strike on March 5 to protest Parliament passing this attack on workers. PAME held a mass demonstration at Syntagma

Square in Athens’ center that morning, with other demonstrations and rallies in more than 62 cities throughout Greece.

Earlier, they had held a massive sit-in at the Ministry of Finance building in Athens and at a number of other government buildings throughout the country. On March 6 PAME members began occupying government printing offices to keep the austerity bill from being printed. (Agence France Presse, March 6).

Combined with the half-day strikes called by the biggest labor union confederation, GSEE, and the civil servants’ union, ADEDY, this action stopped mass transit, closed schools and limited service at hospitals. French television reported that Athens suffered from “a monster traffic jam” all day.

On March 5 in the afternoon there was a police attack on the rally called by the GSEE and ADEDY. The cops were shown on television using batons and tear gas, as well as kicking protesters, who fought back energetically, throwing stones and bottles at the cops. There were at least five arrests and seven cops injured.

Eighty-seven-year-old WWII resistance hero and former MP Manolis Glezos was hospitalized after a cop sprayed him with tear gas. (www.ekathimerini.com)

The Greek unions have announced another general strike for March 11.

“It is a tragedy for the people to lose their rights, to see their wages being cut down despite the long lasting struggles in the previous years, despite the sacrifices that led even to bloodshed. But above all it is a disgrace — and we do not believe that this will happen — for these barbarous measures to pass without the people’s resistance, without the people’s counterattack and even more so to give the impression that the people consent to these measures,” stressed Aleka Papariga, the leader of the Communist Party of Greece, at a special press conference. (inter.kke.gr) □

Icelanders vote ‘No’ payback for bank failure

By G. Dunkel

Faced with a referendum to approve a deal that would have cost every person in Iceland a quarter of their income for the next eight years, 63 percent of Iceland’s registered voters ignored the light snow and came out to massively reject the deal. With almost all the ballots counted, 94 percent were “no,” with spoiled and blank votes outnumbering the 2 percent who voted “yes.”

In January, Iceland President Olafur R. Grimsson vetoed a bill that would have had Icelanders repay \$3.5 billion to Britain and \$1.8 billion to the Netherlands. This veto automatically set up this referendum. In 2008, a private Icelandic bank named IceSave failed. People in the two countries were holding 350,000 accounts in IceSave. The two governments subsidized the losses of British and Dutch account holders.

But the British government has tried to force Iceland to pay this money back. It even applied its anti-terrorism laws against Iceland — whose governments have all been loyal to NATO — to freeze the assets of all Icelandic banks in the country.

This wasn’t the first time British imperialism tried to bully Iceland. In the 1970s, when Iceland imposed a 200-mile limit on its fishing waters, Britain sent warships to ram the Icelandic Coast Guard vessels enforcing the limit. (“Ring of Seasons: Iceland — Its Culture and History,” p. 246).

Iceland is a small island nation of only 320,000 people located just south of the Arctic Circle in the North Atlantic and is still underdeveloped. Fishing, some aluminum processing and tourism are its main economic activities.

Iceland’s banks collapsed as part of the 2008 financial crisis. Its economy managed to stay afloat with a loan from the Nordic countries and the International Monetary Fund, but if the dispute with Great Britain and the Netherlands is not resolved, these loans might be frozen, which would be a major economic blow.

Demonstrators wielding fireworks and whistles took to the streets of Reykjavik on March 6. Signs read, “Power to the People” and “No Deal.” “We are not going to pay the debts for those bankers,” demonstrator Svenbjorn Arnason told National Public Radio. “They have given their debts to us, the people of Iceland.” □

Public-service workers walk out in Portugal

By John Catalinotto

Four of every five public-sector workers in Portugal walked off their jobs on March 4 to protest government plans to decrease pensions, eliminate and outsource jobs and continue a freeze on wages. Trade unions representing more than 500,000 such workers joined the strike.

The issues are remarkably similar to those raised in Greece in this period. A government led by a nominally Socialist Party is attempting to impose severe cutbacks on the working class, while the imperialist bankers of the European Union’s big powers pressure the Portuguese government to impose even greater cutbacks.

In Portugal, as in Greece, there is a major combative trade union confederation — the CGTP — that was organized by the Portuguese Communist Party. The March 4 strike was waged in the name of

the Common Front, which includes other trade union organizations. Even trade unions linked to the governing Socialist Party joined the strike.

Portugal’s unions said their members had suffered worsening conditions for years as public pensions and other benefits were cut. This year, public-sector wages were frozen to appease international speculators concerned about the government’s budget deficit.

The walkout shut schools, hospitals and public offices. Court hearings and waste collection were also affected. According to Ana Avoila, spokesperson for the Common Front, 80 percent of the workers joined the strike, the same as when the three union federations united in 2007. The Common Front announced that there will be local actions in April and a great united protest at the end of May. □

Es urgente un programa de puestos de trabajo 30 MILLONES BUSCAN TRABAJO Gallup Poll muestra que gobierno oculta cifras reales

Por Fred Goldstein

Una encuesta Gallup, difundida el 23 de febrero reveló que en enero, 30 millones de trabajadores/as en los EEUU tuvieron que trabajar solo a tiempo parcial o estaban desempleados/as. Este número, basado en una encuesta de más de 20.000 personas adultas de más de 18 años y realizada del 2 al 31 de enero, equivale a un 20 por ciento de la fuerza laboral.

Llevada a cabo por una de las instituciones encuestadoras más prestigiosa y conservadora en el mundo capitalista, la encuesta utilizó muestras tomadas de todas las regiones del país y de todas las edades.

Las personas entre los 18 y 29 años tienen el nivel más alto de subempleo, oficialmente un 31 por ciento.

No es de extrañar que esta encuesta apenas se mencione en la gran prensa. Esto demuestra que el gobierno está subestimando a millones de trabajadores/as que sufren la crisis de desempleo y subempleo. Comprueba con documentos, como mínimo, que las estadísticas de la Oficina de Estadísticas Laborales y la Oficina Nacional de Investigación Económica han sido deshonestas sobre el verdadero nivel de desempleo.

Esta encuesta de Gallup también muestra las disparidades racistas que se han agravado por la crisis económica. Revela que la tasa de subempleo entre afroamericanos/as y latinos/as, está a un 27 y 29 por ciento respectivamente, en comparación con el subempleo entre blancos/as que está en 17 por ciento. No había nada revelado sobre los/as trabajadores/as inmigrantes, pero otros estudios han mostrado un aumento drástico en el subempleo de los/as trabajadores/as indocumentados/as, especialmente en la industria de la construcción.

Según las agencias del gobierno, el nivel de lo que se denomina “tasa total de desempleo”, una medida llamada U-6, es solamente el 16,5 por ciento, no el 20 por ciento revelado en la encuesta Gallup.

Peor aún, es importante saber que el número oficial del gobierno de “desempleo total” incluye no sólo a trabajadores/as que están desempleados/as y a quienes se ven obligados/as a trabajar a tiempo parcial en vez de a tiempo completo, sino que también incluye a quienes han abandonado la fuerza laboral porque desanimados/as, han dejado de buscar trabajos.

Según AOL News en línea, “Lo sorprendente de los números de Gallup es que las encuestas ni siquiera incluyen a la gente sin empleo por tanto tiempo que ya no son contados en la fuerza laboral”. En el mes de enero, según el gobierno, 1.1 millones de trabajadores fueron clasificados oficialmente como “trabajadores desalentados”.

Por ende, la encuesta de Gallup en sí es imprecisa puesto que si el número oficial del gobierno de 1,1 millones de trabajadores/as que han dejado de buscar trabajo se añade a los 30 millones compilado por Gallup, el número aumentaría.

4,4 millones trabajadores/as desanimados/as

Sin embargo, el encubrimiento del gobierno es aún más amplio de lo que se desprende de la encuesta Gallup. El Instituto de Política Económica (EPI por las siglas en inglés), cuyo ex jefe, Jared Bernstein, es el economista en jefe y asesor de política económica al vice president Joseph Biden, dice: “Desde que comenzó la recesión en diciembre de 2007, la fuerza de trabajo — las personas que están trabajando o buscando trabajo — ha disminuido 700.000 trabajadores, aunque la población en edad laboral ha aumentado 3,7 millones de personas. La reducida fuerza laboral es un reflejo del desaliento con el mercado laboral, ya que los empleos se han vuelto escasos; por lo tanto, muchas personas que buscaban trabajo han dejado de hacerlo”.

Así, según el EPI, casi 4,5 millones de trabajadores/as han abandonado la fuerza laboral, no los/as 1,1 millones contabilizados por el gobierno. Y entre quienes la han abandonado, una proporción alta de manera drástica son jóvenes. La tasa de participación de los/as trabajadores/as de 16-24 años de edad ha disminuido de 59,1 por ciento a un 54,7 por ciento en los 25 meses desde que comenzó la recesión, lo que representa una pérdida de 1,3 millones de trabajadores/as jóvenes. En la encuesta de Gallup, las personas entre 18 y 29 tuvieron el nivel de subempleo más alto, un 31 por ciento.

En el otro extremo de la escala por edad, las personas mayores de 55 años han aumentado su participación en la fuerza laboral porque no pueden permitirse el lujo de jubilarse. En sus últimos años se encuentran trabajando, a menudo obligados/as a competir con jóvenes por trabajos mal remunerados.

Bajo las condiciones “normales” de explotación capitalista — es decir, entre las crisis de alta y baja, cuando los trabajos están más disponibles — la juventud, y especialmente los/as jóvenes negros/as, latinos/as, asiáticos/as y nativos/as, tienen el nivel más alto de desempleo y los salarios más bajos. Ahora que hay una crisis capitalista, la crisis para los/as jóvenes se ha aumentado.

El discurso de “recuperación” para los/as trabajadores/as de todas las edades es un mito. La recuperación es sólo es para los jefes más grandes y ricos.

El discurso sobre una disminución de los despidos se contradujo a finales de febrero por el anuncio de un aumento en las nuevas solicitudes de subsidios por desempleo.

Aumentan solicitudes de seguro por desempleo y caen las ventas de casas

En su informe sobre las solicitudes de desempleo del 25 de febrero, el Departamento del Trabajo dijo que las solicitudes iniciales de subsidio por desempleo aumentaron en 22.000, para un total de 496.000. Los analistas de Wall Street esperaban una disminución con un total de 455.000.

El promedio de cuatro semanas de las solicitudes por desempleo aumentó 6.000, a un total de 473.750. El promedio había caído considerablemente durante el verano y el otoño de su pico en la primavera pasada de alrededor de 650.000 personas. Este año, la mejoría se ha estancado. El promedio de cuatro semanas ha aumentado en alrededor de 30.000 en el último mes. Está ahora muy por encima del nivel de 425.000 que muchos economistas dijeron que iba a señalar la contratación neta. Es un comentario sobre el capitalismo estadounidense el hecho de que el despido de 425.000 trabajadores/as en una semana sea considerado una señal “positiva” de la contratación neta.

Además, la venta de viviendas nuevas cayó 11,2 por ciento en enero, la caída más grande en más de 50 años. Una caída en las ventas de casas nuevas significa más desempleo para trabajadores/as en la construcción.

Una de las razones para esta caída es el número masivo de ejecuciones de hipoteca que especuladores y aún algunos compradores individuales tratan de aprovechar para comprar casas a precios de ganga al escoger entre las millones de casas disponibles por ejecuciones hipotecarias. Pero a pesar de eso, la venta de casas bajó un 7,2 por ciento en enero.

Se esperan cientos de miles más de ejecuciones de hipoteca por la dificultad de los/as trabajadores/as desempleados/as que no pueden seguir pagando sus hipotecas, y hasta los/as que están empleados/as están “bajo el agua”, es decir, que deben mucho más de lo que valen sus casas en el mercado.

Los bancos y prestamistas no ajustarán los préstamos, no suspenderán los pagos de los/as desempleados/as, y están tratando despiadadamente de exprimir cada centavo de los/as dueños/as de casa. Más millones de ejecuciones de hipoteca vendrán a menos que el pueblo se una y demande que se acaben las ejecuciones de hipoteca y desalojos.

Para los/as más de 30 millones de personas sin trabajo o con trabajos a tiempo parcial, sin un plan de cuidado de salud, sin pensión, sin beneficios, sin vacaciones, y con la insoportable presión económica de tratar de sostenerse, la sola idea de que la economía haya ido “recuperándose” por seis meses, debe parecer como una cruel broma.

¿Quiénes comprarán la mercancía?

Una pregunta que hace falta preguntarse es: ¿qué impulsó a la organización Gallup a emprender una encuesta tan extensa? Las cifras contradictorias que están emergiendo de las oficinas del gobierno y de la administración de Obama probablemente han puesto nerviosos a sectores

de la clase dominante. Los consejeros de inversiones, pronosticadores económicos corporativos, hasta los consejeros de política económica, tienen mucho interés en conseguir información confiable sobre la economía. La clase dominante no puede depender solamente de las agencias del gobierno, las cuales están destinadas a exponer inadecuadamente la severidad de la situación por razones políticas.

Uno de los pocos detalles hecho público en la reciente encuesta Gallup fue cuánto menos estaba siendo gastado en el mercado por los/as trabajadores/as subempleados/as comparado con quienes están empleados/as. La discrepancia entre un promedio de \$75 al día de los/as empleados/as comparada con \$48 al día de los/as subempleados/as, aunque esté exagerada, es un hecho para que esas autoridades contemplen las expectativas de una “recuperación” capitalista.

El público supo muy poco de la encuesta y la mayor parte de la información recopilada fue reservada, sin duda solamente para los ojos de la clase dominante y sus consejeros.

Pero la clase dominante está tambaleándose entre una recuperación y una renovación de la crisis capitalista. Todos saben que la estabilización de la economía capitalista, el paro temporero de la espiral hacia abajo de la crisis económica y financiera, estaba construida sobre el rescate masivo de los bancos y el estímulo a la economía.

Los cálculos convencionales dicen que entre 1,5 a 2 millones de empleos fueron creados o rescatados por el paquete de estímulo de \$787 mil millones. El dinero del estímulo debe acabarse a mediados de 2010. El crédito para los/as que compran por primera vez una casa ahora ha sido extendido a quienes anteriormente compraron casa.

El gobierno, los banqueros y los empresarios están esperando a ver qué pasa cuando se acabe el dinero del estímulo y los incentivos. Todos están conteniendo la respiración en la esperanza de que la limitada expansión capitalista continúe.

Pero la clase dominante tiene una contradicción básica en la presente crisis. No se puede mantener una recuperación bajo estas condiciones. Solo una crisis regenerada puede ser el resultado de este paso.

La clase trabajadora, los/as oprimidos/as, las comunidades, los/as estudiantes y jóvenes, y todos/as quienes están siendo victimizados/as por esta crisis capitalista no deben esperar pasivamente por que llegue la salvación de una recuperación económica.

Para ellos/as, la única salida de esta crisis es organizarse y luchar con un programa concreto. Primero en la agenda debe estar una demanda por un programa del gobierno que garantice un empleo con salarios reales con beneficios completos y el derecho libre de trabas, de representación sindical para cada trabajador/a que la necesite.

Los trillones de dólares regalados a los bancos, las corporaciones y al aparato militar pueden pagar tal programa además de garantizar una educación gratuita de calidad para toda la juventud, desde la primaria hasta la universidad. □

